



# The Urban Advocate

December 2007

## IEP Workshop and Clinic at Dudley Library

On Saturday, November 3rd, Urban PRIDE in collaboration with the Disability Law Center (DLC) conducted an IEP Workshop and Clinic at the Dudley Library. Pamela Coveney, Janine Solomon and Regina Marshall, lawyers from the DLC, gave a presentation on understanding the IEP and parents' rights in the Special Education process. The IEP workshop and clinic was well attended, and participants included families and staff from community programs serving youth and families.

Following the initial presentation and question & answer session, parents received individualized consultation from DLC staff. Dee Spinkston, Executive Director of Urban PRIDE, facilitated an information session for the service providers who attended. The discussion focused on gaining a better understanding of how to develop appropriate accommodations for youth with disabilities and how the information in a student's IEP can help them do that.



The partnership between Urban PRIDE and the DLC worked well. Professional school workers and those who had general questions were able to receive answers at the question & answer session, but individual parents who needed more support were able to get advice on a case-by-case basis from the lawyers at DLC.

### *About The Disability Law Center*

The Disability Law Center (DLC) provides protection and advocacy for Massachusetts residents with disabilities by advocating on disability issues that promote the rights of all people to participate fully and equally in social and economic life. DLC serves individuals who experience discrimination, abuse, neglect, or denial of services because of a disability. DLC concentrates on cases that meet their priorities and will make a significant impact for people with disabilities by providing services in the areas of: Access to Community Services, Special Education, Health Care, Disability Benefits, Rights and Conditions in Facilities. For more information, go to [www.dlc-ma.org](http://www.dlc-ma.org) or call the DLC at 617-723-8455.

### **Special Education Workshop**

For families who have children with disabilities in Boston.

Presented by Urban PRIDE and  
The Disability Law Center

**Saturday, January 26, 2008**

**9:30am to 3:30pm**

Food and Childcare provided, but  
you must register in advance.

**Hibernian Hall**

**184 Dudley St. (Dudley Square)**

**Roxbury, MA 02119**

**To register, call 617-723-8455**

**Or register online at**

**[www.dlc-ma.org](http://www.dlc-ma.org)**



# Organizing Your Child's Special Education Documents

By the Disability Law Center Staff

## What Information Do You Have?

From the time your child starts school to when s/he leaves, you will accumulate hundreds of documents. If eligible, your child is entitled to special education services from infancy to when s/he either graduates or turns 22. That means you may have documents that span a course of more than 20 years! They will include the following, among many others:

- Individual Education Plans (IEPs) • Evaluations • Progress reports • Correspondence • Notes •
- Journals • Samples of your child's work • Medical records •

You might be tempted to throw them out, but even the oldest documents in your child's history might help you to get better educational services for him/her.

***There is a basic rule in special education that if you did not write it down, it did not happen. This summary helps you decide: what documents you should keep; and how to organize them sensibly***

## What Documents Do You Keep?

***IEPs and other Service Plans.*** In addition to IEPs, you should keep plans written by non-school service agencies, such as DMR or DMH. These other plans are called IFSPs.

***Evaluations.*** Either the school district or an independent evaluator might have performed them. They include educational, psychological, and/or neuropsychological reports, speech and language evaluations, or occupational or physical therapy reports.

***Medical Records.*** Keep the ones that relate to your child's ability to learn, or to use school programs and facilities. *When in doubt, keep it.*

***Progress Reports and Report Cards.*** These should be received up to three times per year, they are the formal documents the school system uses to describe the progress your child is making progress on both his/her report card and toward their IEP goals and objectives.

***Standardized Test Results.*** School systems often give standardized tests to all students. The MCAS is one example. These tests can provide a helpful comparison to the progress reports your child's teachers write. For example, she might perform very well on the test while still failing in school.

***Notes on your Child's Behavior or Progress.*** These include any of the following: notes from you to the teacher; notes the teacher writes to you; or journal entries between you and your child's service providers, such as speech therapists, counselors, physical or occupational therapists, incident reports,

***Correspondence.*** Save any letters between you and your child's teachers, special education staff, IEP Team Facilitator (ETF/chairperson) and evaluators. **Don't forget e-mails!** Print them out and include them in your child's file. Also save any general school correspondence addressed to you and other parents about issues affecting your child. These might include letters about new programs, changes in programs or services, school system policies, or budget issues.

## What Additional Information Should you Keep?

***Keep a Calendar.*** Note important dates. When did your child start school? When did was his/her last IEP meeting? When do you request those evaluations? It is very important to *write down each and every day the school suspends your child or calls you to remove him from school.*

***Keep a journal or notebook .***

## Cotting School Tuesday Vision Clinic for Students with Special Needs

Does your child or student have a physical, communication, or learning disability?

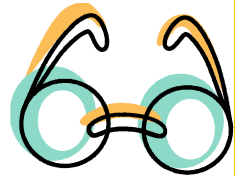
If so, Cotting School would like to invite your student to come and receive the following:

- Fully Funded Vision Assessment;
- Voucher for Eyewear;
- Transportation Provided by Cotting School for Each Student.

**Please contact Dr. Nancy Carlson on a Tuesday for an appointment. Phone: 781-862-7323 x136**

This service to the community is made possible through the generous support of the John Alden Trust. Special thanks to our partners New England Eye Institute and New England College of Optometry. Cotting School is the nation's first day school for students with a broad spectrum of learning and communication disabilities, physical challenges, and complex medical conditions.

**COTTING SCHOOL 453•Concord Avenue•Lexington, MA 02421•[www.cotting.org](http://www.cotting.org)**



## Born to Learn: Early Childhood

### Children's Play: The Roots of Reading

This engaging book demonstrates the importance of play in helping children learn literacy skills, social awareness and creative problem solving. ISBN: 9780943657752

### Homemade toys

Parents as Teachers, a nationwide early childhood parent education program, brings families a variety of activities and instructions for making toys from materials in the home. These homemade toys and play activities not only promote development in young children, but they also encourage non-violent, inclusive play, stimulate the child's creativity, and are safe and age-appropriate. Play is an important part of a child's development and they will use toys and objects in their play. These don't have to be purchased toys, many are found in the home. Parents as Teachers offers instructions for making toys from items around the house for children from infancy to preschool. Here is a simple toy that promotes a 1-year-old's small muscle skills and problem solving:

### Chips in a Can

- a) Give the child a container filled with chips and a can with a slot in the lid.
- b) Show the child how the chips fit in the slot when the slot is parallel to his body.
- c) When all the chips are in, empty them out and turn the can so the slot is perpendicular to the child's body.
- d) Encourage the child to put the chips back in the can.

Although it sounds simple, this toy draws on a 1-year-old's problem solving abilities as the slot changes positions. This activity also allows parents to offer step-by-step instructions which helps increase a child's vocabulary.

### Bowling

This is another simple game suitable for 3 or 4-year-olds encourages eye-hand coordination, and allows children to make predictions.

- a) Set up six pins (use two-liter soda bottles, paper towel rolls, potato chip containers or lightweight plastic cups). Add up to 12 pins as the child's skill increases.
  - b) Take turns bowling; use different balls ranging in size and weight (ping pong ball, jacks ball, whiffle ball).
- This simple, inexpensive game encourages preschoolers to use logic as they attempt to figure out which ball will knock down the most pins.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

### N.I.C.E. Program

The N.I.C.E. Program is a Saturday enrichment program to provide high quality programming for Boston residents, ages 8 to 22, with disabilities. The program provides structured, weekly opportunities for participants and their families to make new friends, have fun, learn and grow.

The program will run three Saturdays a month from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at the Blackstone Community Center in the South End, Curtis Hall Community Center in Jamaica Plain and Paris Street Community Center in East Boston. Each site will have a maximum of 16 participants to ensure a low participant to staff ratio. Enrollment at each site is on a first come, first served basis. The program is scheduled to run from November 10, 2007 through April 26, 2007. The cost per child for the entire length of the program is \$150.

Program Requirements:

- Be between the ages of 8 and 22 for youth with disabilities
- Be able to interact in a 4:1 participant to staff ratio
- Be a Boston resident (proof of residency required)
- Provide own transportation to and from the program
- Complete required application

**For more information or an application please contact (617) 635-4920 x. 2133 or 2402**

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

### Free Drop-In Tutoring

826 Boston will begin its drop-in tutoring starting Monday, January 7. Tutoring will be offered Monday-Thursday from 2:30-5:30 p.m. at the 826 Boston writing center located in Eggleston Square. Any student aged 6-18 can drop in and receive one-on-one help from a trained tutor on any type of homework, from math to history to science and English. After a student has finished their homework, tutors are available to help students with individual creative writing projects, which may be submitted for publication in a semesterly 826 Boston chapbook.

To register, or for more info email [info@826boston.org](mailto:info@826boston.org), or call 617-442-5400. 826 Boston, 3035 Washington St., (Eggleston Square) Roxbury, MA 02119

### Free Computer Public Access

The Freedom House is pleased to offer Public Computer Access from 12-6pm, Monday through Friday and 9am-1pm on Saturdays. For more information, call 617-445-3700 or drop in.

14 Crawford St, Grove Hall, Dorchester.

### Timothy Smith Network

Free Computer training offered to residents of Boston's Empowerment Zone. Vine Street Community Center, 339 Dudley St, Roxbury. For more information about registration, please call 617-635-1287 x103 or visit

[www.timothysmithnetwork.org](http://www.timothysmithnetwork.org) .

### Accessible Arts Workshop for Kids

Spontaneous Celebrations in collaboration with Boston's First Night is offering an adapted Visual Arts Workshop in Spanish and English which includes participants (ages 3-12 years old) children/youth with disabilities, siblings, and caregivers.

**Thursday, December 27th from 10:00-12:00**  
**Nate Smith House, 155 Lamartine Street, Jamaica Plain** (near Stonybrook on Orange Line)  
Pre-registration is required by December 21st. Suggested Materials fee of \$3.00-5.00 if able. Call Ed Pazzanese at 617-524-6373 to register.

### Parent Education Series

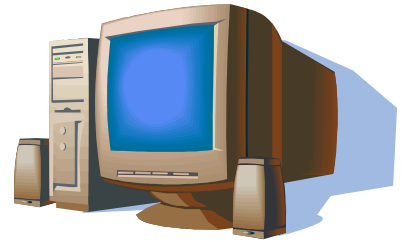
#### Children and the Internet: Maximizing the Positives, Minimizing the Risk

By Alejandra Hernandez

**Thursday, February 7th, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.**

This workshop helps parents understand the impact of technology on their children and establish their own guidelines for the developmentally appropriate use of the internet. Strategies for keeping children safe are also shared.

**Lesley Ellis School**  
**41 Foster Street**  
**Arlington, MA 02474**  
**781-641-5987**  
[www.lesleyellis.org](http://www.lesleyellis.org)



### The Technology Enrichment Program

Get academic enrichment and homework assistance after school, Monday through Friday, 3-6pm for children ages 6-13 at the Beulah Cultural Center, 457 Blue Hill Ave, Dorchester.

### Mayor's Office Gift Program

The Mayor's Office is going to do the Holiday Gift Giving Program again this year. As long as you have an address in Boston, families are eligible to apply. Submit a letter which includes:

**Child's Name**  
**Child's Age**  
**Child's Gender**  
**School they attend**  
**Address**  
**Phone**

**Brief description of need**

All letters should be mailed to:

**ATTN: Holiday Gift Giving Program**  
**1 City Hall Plaza**  
**Boston, MA 02201**

### Free GED Program at JFYNetWorks

JFYNetWorks is currently accepting applications for its GED classes. Small classes and individual tutoring available. Program hours are Mon.-Thurs., 9am-1:30pm. Information sessions are every Monday at 2pm. (except holidays). JFYNetWorks is located at 125 Tremont St., Boston. Go to [www.jfyboston.org](http://www.jfyboston.org) or call 617-338-0815.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Family Supports

The HSC Foundation is committed to supporting families and other individuals who are providing care for infants, youth, and adults with chronic illness, disabilities, at-risk for disabilities, or who have unique health care needs.

The purpose of the Foundation's Family Supports Initiative is to:

- \* Provide knowledge regarding systems of care, home and family care practices, and community resources;
  - \* Support family needs through technical training, counseling, and peer support;
  - \* Strengthen skills in the areas of negotiation, conflict management, and advocacy; and
  - \* Support related research, development, and evaluation.
- \* Partnering with Your Child's School: A Guide for Parents
- \* Information and Resources for Families of Children with Health and/or Mental Health Care Needs.

This is designed to help parents of children who have been diagnosed with health or mental health care needs to learn about available resources and to develop a partnership with their children's school.

[www.hscfoundation.org/whatwedo/familysupports.php](http://www.hscfoundation.org/whatwedo/familysupports.php)

### GovBenefits

GovBenefits.gov is the official benefits Web site of the U.S. Government. GovBenefits.gov provides citizens with a one-stop source for connecting to over 1000 government assistance programs.

GovBenefits.gov is continually expanding its program database to offer the American public access to government benefit resources with the added convenience of being accessible 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. Once on the site, visitors seeking assistance can quickly find programs they may be eligible to receive after using the confidential online screening questionnaire. [www.GovBenefits.gov](http://www.GovBenefits.gov)

### Family Literacy

For parents who want to instill a love of reading in their children but may struggle with their own literacy issues, there's a fabulous website with read-along stories & songs at [www.rif.org/readingplanet/content/read\\_aloud\\_stories.msp](http://www.rif.org/readingplanet/content/read_aloud_stories.msp) (in English and en Español). And, if books are on someone's holiday wish list, you'll find lots of suggestions and poll results to see how kids rated the books.



### Able-Play Toys



Need a toy for someone special who has special needs? Visit <http://www.ableplay.org/> to search for and learn about toys for children with physical, communication, sensory or cognitive issues.



### *We've Moved!*

Our new address is:

**Urban PRIDE**

**184 Dudley Street, Suite 104LL (lower level)  
Roxbury, MA 02119**

**Phone:** 617-989-3929

**Fax:** 617-989-3925

*Charlotte "Dee" Spinkston*, Executive Director: ext. 301

*Shannon Van de Riet*, Project Assistant: ext. 302